INDIAN CRIME FICTION: A STUDY IN CRIMINAL PSYCHOLOGY WITH REFERENCE TO HANS EYSENCK'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY Selected works: *The Mahabharata Murders (2017) 3 and a Half Murders (2017) More Bodies will Fall (2018) Murdrum (2021) Greenlight (2017) Birds of Prey (2016) Silent Witness (2020) Three Men and a Strange Murder (2021)*

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Synopsis

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Crime has always been a phenomenon of great fascination among people. It has always attracted, intrigued as well as repelled the masses. Crime is often defined legally as an act which intentionally violates the legal code. There are various opinions of experts regarding the definition of crime. Some define it as an act which harms others, some explain it as a violation of legal code defined by the law while some describe it as an act that causes blameworthy harm to people and is condemned by the public or state.

Thomas J. Bernard in *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines crime as "the intentional commission of an act usually deemed socially harmful or dangerous and specifically defined, prohibited, and punishable under criminal law". Criminologist Paul Tappan defines crime as "an intentional act or omission in violation of criminal law […] committed without defense or justification, and sanctioned by the state as a felony or misdemeanor." According to Paul Tappan when an act is intentionally committed in order to harm other people without any justification, then it is placed under the definition of crime. Similarly, *Oxford English Dictionary* defines crime as "an act punishable by law, as being forbidden by statute or injurious to the public welfare. An evil or injurious act, an offence, especially of a grave character."

Crime fiction is a genre in literature that deals with crimes, their detection, criminals and their motives. It is one of the most popular genres which is generally narrated from the perspective of a detective or a narrator. The narrative centres on an act of crime, generally murder and its solution from different perspectives. Crime fiction is an umbrella term for many sub-genres, from early detective stories to the stories of the Golden age and from the investigative stories of police procedurals to the thriller. Each of the sub-genre possesses its own characteristics which make the genre of crime fiction vaster. The early Puzzle mysteries are often seen set-in countryside with people of different classes living together. In Hard-Boiled fiction the narrative is generally centred on the action rather than the psyche of the character or the criminal. It often has a particular setting like streets of America populated with criminals with their street slang and an investigator working to make his living. Police procedurals are characterized by realism as they are based on actual police investigation of a crime, focusing on the legal aspect with the same legal terminology. Language and setting play an important role in these thrillers as the correct use of suspenseful emotion and tone will create a sense of excitement in the reader.

The genre of crime fiction is said to be deeply rooted in British and American soil. Later, it flourished further in many other countries and especially Asian countries. The genre of Indian crime fiction is of recent development. While Indian readers were always interested in mysteries and crimes, yet there were not many writers of crime fiction in India. The problem faced by Indian readers was they could not identify with the themes, plot and characters of the western novels. They had to turn towards the western writers like Agatha Christie and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The setting too was of western places and cities. Famous author of Indian crime fiction, R.V. Raman points out:

> There was (and is) no dearth of stories in India. From epics that are thousands of years old to fables and fairy tales […] But there was a gap- few of the tales were murder mysteries or detective stories. For these, we turned to western authors- Christie, Conan Doyle, Edgar Wallace etc. All this was incredibly fascinating […] however there was problem. Not one of these stories was set in India, the only country I knew and related to. […] Even as I devoured murder mysteries from the UK and the US, I longed for similar books that were set in familiar environs, in India. (Raman 1)

Hence, the translation of various novels from English to native language started coming into play. The genre of crime fiction was introduced in India as a part of the translation practices. The commercial success was another reason that made writers translate the western works of crime fiction into their native languages such as Hindi, Bengali and Tamil. Later, the writers started making changes in the translation and began using such themes and characters that were more relatable to Indian readers. Bengali writers such as Panchkadi De (1873-1975) and Dinendra Kumar Ray (1869-1945) are the most famous writers known for their contribution in the development of Indian crime fiction. Another popular work titled *Kokila or The Terrible Fruit of Sin* published in 1908 by Ishwar Prasad Sharma made a huge impact on the genre with him introducing a plot full of mystery and suspense. He, for the first time presented a captivating plot in front of Indian readers which included kidnappings, dead bodies and blood spatter.

Further development in Indian crime fiction took place when the writers started incorporating more of Indian locales in their works. They wanted to prove their competence in writing crime fiction just like the famous western writers. The representation of Indian culture and life became a prominent aspect along with the depiction of crime. During the 1950s the writers turned to showcase the contemporary social scenario in the form of various types of crimes such as theft, kidnapping, illegal prostitution etc. Among the famous works of this period is *Thaanavan* by Panditha Nadesa Saaruthiyar.

It became the most popular novel in crime fiction because of its varying themes and collection of criminal activities such as theft, abduction and strange murders.

The post-independence crime fiction writers started depicting more grave issues such as terrorism, serial killings, honour killings, rape, political murders and police murders etc. The immense success of crime fiction in India encouraged the writers to attempt and experiment with new themes and plots. The writers tried to captivate their readers by giving them highly mysterious stories while dealing with various Indian social and cultural issues in the background. The genre of crime fiction in India has only expanded and developed further with time and in the contemporary era the writers experiment with various sub-genres of crime fiction such as spy-thrillers, fantasy-thrillers, serial killer fiction, psycho-fancy killings, forensic and suspense mysteries etc.

During the earlier times the genre of Indian crime fiction was mainly dominated by the male writers. It was in the late twentieth century that a few female writers of Indian crime fiction started emerging. The women writers also introduced a female detective in their stories thereby adding a new dimension in the development of Indian crime fiction. These writers started portraying the real problems faced by the women in the contemporary society such as sexual and domestic abuse, child prostitution, female foeticide etc. One of the leading female writers of Indian crime fiction, Madhumita Bhattacharyya, while talking about the development of Indian crime fiction says:

> Indian female author of crime fiction is a rare sighting on the Indian crime fiction writing scene. While Indians are voracious consumers of mystery and crime genre, there are hardly any Indian crime writers, let alone female writers. When *The Masala Murder* came out, few contemporary crime novels were being written in English. Now, you will find many. However, there are still few women detectives on Indian bookshelves […] Globally crime novels are incredibly popular, and Indian readers seem to embrace these authors. But this sadly is not the case with novels written by Indians. So much so that most publishers are turning away Indian crime. […] The idea of a young female detective from an average, everyday sort of background really appealed to me. Perhaps because there wasn't anyone like her on the Indian literary scene, perhaps because I could relate to her, or because she is the kind of character I love to read.

In the contemporary times, the genre which started as a result of translation process has achieved great significance. Indian crime fiction represents variety of themes and takes up social, political, and economic issues such as poverty, crime and injustice against women, illegal prostitution, child abuse, political violence etc. One of the major characteristic features of Indian crime fiction is its typical Indian setting. The stories are often set in villages and metropolis as the writers believe it gives them as well as

their readers a sense of belonging. Through their mystery series and corporate thrillers, they take their readers to various Indian cities, remote countryside and at times picturesque locales such as the Himalayan foothills.

What is common to all these sub-genres of crime fiction is the disruption and restitution of equilibrium. It is a stereotypical plot where an act of crime affects the whole society and disrupts the whole social and legal order. The modern characteristic of this genre is its dual narrative where the criminal act occurs in the very beginning of the novel and the narrative is then based on the uncovering of that crime and the criminal. The narrative is based on the slow unearthing of minute details and the investigator goes back in the past while at the same time the other narrative shows the progression of the investigation. In some novels the primary focus might be on the analysis of a psychopathic or anti-social person. Developed in the early nineteenth century the genre has gained immense popularity and appreciation among the readers and has even developed into many sub-genres. Crime fiction is characterized by its focus on the minutest of details. The writer makes sure that the plot and narrative are set in such a manner that even the smallest detail proves to be a crucial source of information. These details or evidences are scattered all over the novel through which the writer engages the reader in the story by making the narrative even more exciting and suspenseful. Tzvetan Todorov, in his essay *The Typology of Detective Fiction* says that crime or detective fiction contains not one but two stories i.e., the story of the crime and the story of its investigation. Todorov explains:

> It is no accident that it is often told by a friend of the detective, who explicitly acknowledges that he is writing a book; the second story consists, in fact, in explaining how this very book came to be written. The first story ignores the book completely, that is, it never confesses its literary nature (no author of detective fiction can permit himself to indicate directly the imaginary character of the story, as it happens in literature.) on the other hand the second story is not only supposed to take the reality of the book into account, but it is precisely the very story of the book. (Todorov 45)

Criminal psychology which is also known as ‘Forensic psychology’ or ‘Investigative psychology’ is sub- field in the area of psychology which deals with the study of crime and criminal behaviour. It studies the intentions, attitudes, thought- process, actions and reactions of a criminal and the reason behind an act of crime. According to D.A. Andrews:

> The psychology of criminal conduct or criminal psychology is an approach to understanding the criminal behavior of individuals through: (a) the ethical and humane application of systematic empirical methods of investigation and (b) the construction of rational explanatory systems.

> Professionally criminal psychology involves the ethical application of psychological knowledge and methods to practical tasks of predicting and influencing the likelihood of criminal behaviour and to the reduction of the human and social costs associated with crime. (Andrews 8)

Criminal psychologists probe deep into the mind of a criminal in order to know the reason behind the criminal act. There are several perspectives and dimensions through which a criminal is studied. A number of theories have originated in the past few years which describe criminal behaviour. The purpose of theory of crime is to identify the causes of criminal behaviour. Some theories such as sociological theories suggest that the social surroundings of a man lead him to commit crime, psychological theories suggest that a man commits crime due to a psychological problem like anti- social or psychotic behaviour. Neurological approach suggests that some damage in the brain may lead a person to commit crime and the biological approach extends the belief that aggressive and violent behaviour leads to a criminal act. As Russil Durrant explains:

> Criminology is defined as the study of crime, criminal behaviour, and responses to crime. Criminal psychology, then, critically involves the use of psychology as a science to advance our understanding of the causes of crime. Psychology here refers to the academic discipline of psychology (which includes the study, among other things, of brain processes, development, cognition, personality, social influence, and culture) not just peoples' thinking process. (Durrant 8)

Edwin Sutherland in his book *Principles of Criminology* published in 1947 explains that people do not learn criminal behaviour just by living in a criminogenic environment instead by observing violent behaviour eliciting a positive response. Larry J. Siegal points out that "a definition favorable toward criminality occurs, for example, when a person hears friends talking about the virtues of getting high on drugs. A definition unfavorable toward crime occurs when friends or parents demonstrate their disapproval of crime" (174).

While a number of social factors contribute to criminal behaviour, there are certain psychological aspects as well. It suggests that people who indulge in violent or aggressive behaviour may be suffering from some or the other mental dilemma. It is observed that individuals indulging in aggressive behaviour are most of the times trying to shift their anger from one thing to another. Individuals coming from homes with physical abuse or lack of supervision often demonstrate violent response to their environment. Parents who abuse their children physically and sexually also expose their children to elicit aggressive behaviour.

Within Psychological Theories of Crime there are some major explanations of crime that provide different perspectives into the psychology of crime. The Personality Theory argues that there are a number of personality traits which are associated with an act of crime or violent behaviour. People who are egoistic, self-centred, narcissistic, jealous, indifferent etc., tend to show more aggressive and violent behaviour to a higher degree in comparison to others. Individuals who suffer from serious personality disorders such as psychoses, or anti-social behaviour are perceived to be more violent. People with such traits have been described as violent, manipulative, cold-hearted and incapable of feeling anxiety or remorse for others. They are able to justify their actions to themselves which makes them feel reasonable and just for acting violently. Some criminologists have argued that there exists a connection between an act of crime and intelligence level of the criminal. It is believed that people with extremely high IQ are more expected to commit a crime than people of average IQ.

One of the most popular theories of personality that studied criminal behaviour was given by German- British psychologist Hans Jurgen Eysenck (1916-1997). He wrote and published a number of books and over 1,600 journals and articles in the field of psychology. Eysenck is widely regarded for his Theory of Personality and Intelligence. He created a distinct dimensional model of personality structure based on empirical and analytical research. He also created a number of psychometric scales to measure levels of personality and intelligence such as Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ), and Eysenck Personality Profiler (EPP) etc. Eysenck also played a vital role in the emergence of clinical and behavioural psychology in Britain. Even though he was termed the most controversial individual, yet during the time of his death, Eysenck was one of the prominent writers and the most cited psychologist.

Hans Eysenck in his book *Crime and Personality* published in 1964 established a relationship between criminal behaviour and personality. According to him, personality traits play a key role in criminality. He was of the view that some personality traits along with certain environmental forces lead to criminal behaviour or conduct. His studies show that delinquent behaviour can be demonstrated or predicted if the personality traits are analysed from an early age. Eysenck defines personality as:

> Personality is "the sum total of the actual or potential behavior patterns of the organism, as determined by heredity and environment. It originates and develops through the functional interactions of the four main sectors into which these behavior patterns are organized - The

> cognitive sectors (Intelligence), conative sector (character) affective sector (temperament) and the somatic sector (constitution). (Eysenck 43)

Hans Eysenck gave three dimensions of personality which are famously known as the PEN model. This model propagates a hierarchical classification of personality levels. At the bottom of this model are common behaviours such a talking with a friend on an occasion. At the second level in the hierarchy are the recurring behaviours of an individual and at the third level are the traits of sociability which comprise of correlated sets of habits. At the top in this hierarchy are the super factors or dimensions of personality such as extraversion which is an inter-related set of traits and factors. The three super factors about which Eysenck talks and upon which the PEN model is based are Psychoticism (P), Extraversion (E) and Neuroticism (N). Eysenck says, "In the PEN model, these dimensions or super factors are based on "constitutional, genetic, or inborn factors, which are to be discovered in the physiological, neurological, and biochemical structure of the individual" (43) Eysenck strongly puts forth his view that there are only three dimensions of personality i.e., extraversion-introversion, psychoticism versus impulse control and emotional stability versus instability or neuroticism.

Hans Eysenck's definition of extraversion somewhat differs from the common view. According to him extravert people tend to lose their control easily and that is what makes them susceptible to criminal conduct. But it is also not the case that introverts are not susceptible to criminality. There are many instances where a crime was committed by an introvert. Eysenck says that introverts who are usually repressed and quiet tend to change themselves when they experience a change of environment. If an individual will have high extraversion and moderate psychoticism then he might fall prey to criminality.

Neuroticism is characterised by anxiety, worry, mood swings and low emotional control. People who have high score in neuroticism tend to be more anxious and lack persistence. Such people show low emotional control and will power and react quite strongly to aversive stimuli. When the neuroticism is low in an individual's personality then he tends to show more calm and stable behaviour and has relatively unreactive nervous system whereas when it is on the higher side it exhibits a strong degree of instability. People with such kind of personality where neuroticism is dominant; tend to suffer more frequently from nervous disorders which in common terms are known as 'neuroses. He does not imply

that people who have high neuroticism are necessarily neurotics but suggested that they are just more susceptible to it.

According to Eysenck, psychoticism is the most troublesome of all. People with psychoticism are highly impulsive, aggressive, lack empathy, insensitive, cruel, hostile, socially withdrawn and also creative. Such type of person glorifies his act of crime and remains unaware of the consequences that his actions might cause.

As Eysenck propounded the Personality Theory, his belief of personality being related and influenced by a number of external and genetic factors became stronger. He said that these traits vary among individuals and remain either stable or unstable depending upon on the individual. He was of the belief that by only focusing on these behavioural, mental and personality traits one can see deeper into the personality structure of an individual. Eysenck's approach is somewhat multi-dimensional in nature as it is a combination of biological, psychological and social influences and factors. As he himself clarifies, "the notion of personality is intimately related to the notion of stability, consistency and repeated occurrences of actions. It refers to the variation of number of behavioural acts" (16).

The proposed study aims to probe into the nature and depiction of crime in the writings of male and female writers of Indian Crime Fiction, while applying the Theory of Personality to the selected works of Indian crime fiction. For the purpose of the applicational study the following works have been selected:

1. *The Mahabharata Murders* (2017) by Arnab Ray
2. *3 and a Half Murders* (2017) by Salil Desai
3. *More Bodies will Fall* (2018) by Ankush Saikia
4. *Murdrum (2021) by* Dr. Sahil Makwana
5. *Greenlight* (2017) by Kalpana Swaminathan
6. *Birds of Prey* (2016) by Archana Sarat
7. *Silent Witness* (2020) by Sharmishtha Shenoy
8. *Three Men and a Strange Murder* (2021) by Chitrangada Mukherjee

Arnab Ray is an Indian novelist, blogger and podcaster born in Kolkata, India. He has also written a number of articles for various magazines such as *The Washington Post* and *Outlook.* His works in the domain of writing include books such as *May I Hebb Your Attention Pliss* (2010), *The Mine* (2012), *Yatrik* (2014), *Sultan of Delhi: Ascension* (2016) and *The Mahabharata Murders* (2017). In his crime novel *The Mahabharata Murders* which was published in 2017 Ray has presented a unique story by

naming the characters after the epic *Mahabharata*. The killer in the novel thinks of himself as Duryodhana and one after another he starts killing people who he claims are the Pandavas. He kills a girl by cutting her open thinking her to be Draupadi and hammers surgical needles into a man calling him Sehdeva. Ray has written an exceptional crime novel while revealing the psychology of the killer based in modern day Calcutta.

Salil Desai is an Indian author, columnist and filmmaker. He has written a number of crime novels and short stories which have been translated into a number of regional languages as well. As a columnist, Desai has over 400 articles and features to his credit. His writings in crime fiction include *Killing Ashish Karve* (2014), *The Murder of Sonia Raikkonen* (2015), and *Murder on a Side Street* (2011) etc. His novel *3 and a Half Murders* published in 2017 is his fifth book which narrates the story of investigation carried out by inspector Saralkar. The police find two corpses i.e. of a man and a woman with a suicide note and a murder confession. What police thinks of as a commonplace crime of a husband killing his unfaithful wife turns out to be something more sinister than what is being portrayed. The novel brings into light the strong emotions of envy, anger and betrayal.

Ankush Saikia is an Indian author and journalist who was born in 1975 in Assam. Before taking up writing as a full-time profession, Ankush Saikia was a journalist at *India Today* and *Express India* as well as a senior editor at a renowned publishing firm Dorling Kindersley. Many of his books have been shortlisted for film productions and won many awards. He won the Shanghai Writers' Association fellowship in 2018 among his various literary achievements. Some of his works include *The Girl from Nongrim Hills* (2013), *Dead Meat* (2015), *Red River, Blue Hills* (2015), *Remember Death* (2016) etc. His one of the most acclaimed novels *More Bodies Will Fall* (2018) presents the story of a girl who is murdered in Delhi. The prime suspect is the girl's boyfriend who is left free because of lack of evidence. When the case is assigned to detective Arjun Arora, he pledges to deliver justice to the girl. Amid the theme of police neglect and racial injustice, the author has presented a wonderful murder and suspense thriller.

Dr. Sahil Makwana is an expert in medicine and works as a doctor in a reputed hospital. Apart from being a doctor, he is also a fashion photographer, screenwriter, assistant director, fitness expert and a writer. His profession as a doctor helps him in writing books which are rich in forensic and

intriguing details. His latest novel *Murdrum: The Probe Begins* (2021) portrays the investigation going on in the department after a child finds the decapitated head of a woman. The serial killer leaves no evidence except the 'two dots' as a clue for the police. The author is said to have used his knowledge of medical science to present a thrilling crime fiction story.

Kalpana Swaminathan is an Indian writer and surgeon from Mumbai. She has written a number of novels since she began writing in 1993. She also writes with Isharat Syed under the pen name Kalpish Ratna. Her major works include *The Page Three Murders* (2006), *Bougainvillea House* (2006*), I Never Knew it was you* (2012), *The Secret Gardner* (2013) etc. She won the Vodafone Crossword Book Award in 2009 for her book *Venus Crossing* and The Hindu Best Fiction Award in 2010. Her novel *Greenlight* published in 2017 brings to light the reality of slum areas by presenting a serial killer who leaves the raped, mutilated and wrapped up corpses of children at the door step of police headquarters. The novel also features the famous detective Lalli, a sixty-year-old woman with sharp shooting abilities.

Archana Sarat is an Indian author, poet, short story and flash fiction author. She is also the author of finance related articles in newspapers like *The Times of India* and *The Economic Times*. Her book *Tales from the History of Mathematics* won the best Children's/Young Adults Book 2019 at the Valley of Words International Literary Festival. Her debut novel *Birds of Prey* published in 2016 is a psychological crime thriller that presents the story where men in Mumbai are seen mysteriously going missing and all the investigation leads to an old woman who was seen escorting them to a place. Later, the bodies of all three men are found in a sack in a forest area. The novel follows the course of investigation that goes on in finding the actual killer.

Chitrangada Mukherjee is an Indian novelist who currently works as a content specialist. She had also been a history and English teacher before she took up writing recently. Her earlier books such as *Strange As It May Seem* and *Secret Diary of an Incurable Romantic* were published by famous publishers until she started independently publishing her books such as *Unfaithful*, *Her Husband's Killer* etc. Her novel *Three Men and a Strange Murder* published in 2021 was one of the most read works in the category of crime fiction. The novel along with presenting the mystery of a murdered woman also brings to light the various social issues that are presented through the plot and characters.

Sharmishtha Shenoy is a novelist as well as a short story writer. Before turning towards writing, she worked as an IT professional in renowned companies like Microsoft, Infosys and TCS. Her books have been translated into a number of languages such as English, Hindi, Marathi etc. Her recent novel *Silent Witness* published in 2020 also features her famous character Vikram Rana, investigating the murder of a real estate developer who dies after drinking a can of soda brought by one of his friends. As the investigation is still going on, more people from his company start getting murdered. Shenoy through the plot has tried to bring to light the values of people who consider money and wealth above human relationships.

Literature review reveals that criminal psychology has been used to study some works of crime fiction and films but it has not yet been applied to the study of the selected Indian literary works. A conference paper published by University of London in June 2014 titled *Between suspense and psychological thriller – the examination of criminal intrigue, the psychology of guilt and abnormal human behaviour in Patricia Highsmith's Strangers on a Train and The Talented Mr. Ripley* aimed at examining the elements of suspense and psychological thrillers in the novels of Patricia Highsmith. The author of the paper explored the novels in the light of psychological dimension of personality disorders, identity crisis and internal conflicts.

In 2019 a research paper published by University of Nottingham, United Kingdom titled *Demystifying the Criminal Mind: Linguistic, Social and Generic Deviance in Contemporary American Crime Fiction* explored the nature of contemporary American crime fiction. The author explained the stylistic, literary and social deviations that govern the genre of crime fiction.

A Ph.D. thesis published by Mahatma Gandhi University in 2014 entitled *On the trail of mysteries: Detextualizing the criminal and the detective in crime detective fiction* deals with Indian detective fiction and criminal. It deals also deals with the interpretation and development of detective fiction and the representation of the criminal and the detective in it.

A paper published by "International Journal of Criminal Justice Sciences" entitled *Role of Psychosocial Factors in Criminal Behaviour in Adults in India* studied a group of twenty individuals with criminal record using Eysenck's Personality Questionnaire.

A Ph.D. synopsis submitted to Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University in 2018 titled *Indian English Crime Fiction by the Contemporary Woman English Writers: A Critical Study* aims at analysing the themes and techniques used by women writers of crime fiction in India.

The survey also reveals that Indian crime fiction needs more attention of the researchers to prove that Indian writers can be at par with their western counterparts. The literature review also shows that only articles and commentaries have been written on selected works of India but in-depth research has not been carried out. The proposed study not only relates crime fiction with criminal psychology but it also compares and contrasts the nature of crime and its representation in literature of male and female writers. In the process of analysis along with psychological aspect this dimension will also be investigated. It is hoped that the proposed study would open up new frontiers and opportunities for more interdisciplinary and cross-cultural studies.

The objectives of the proposed study would be:

1. To trace the origin and development of Crime Fiction in India.
2. To analyse the major aspects of Criminal Psychology with an in-depth analysis of Hans Eysenck's Theory of Personality.
3. To apply Hans Eysenck's Theory of Personality to the selected works of Indian crime fiction.
4. To make a stylistic analysis of the selected literary works.
5. To examine the scope and relevance of Criminal Psychological theories in the study of literature.

In the light of the above objectives, the chapter scheme of the proposed study would be as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Criminal Psychology and Hans Eysenck's Theory of Personality

Chapter 3: Psychology of Crime: Application of Theory of Personality to Selected Literary Works

Chapter 4: Between Society and Deduction: Analysis of Selected Works with Reference to Theory of Personality

Chapter 5: Rhetoric of Crime: A Stylistic Study of Selected Literary Works

Chapter 6: Conclusion

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